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GREAT PLACES

108 Iowa: 'It's good,' period

By Kurt Rogahn
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CEDAR RAPIDS — What's needed to make your place a great place?

Maybe more live music, more support for the arts, more public transportation in the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City corridor and stronger encouragement for young people.

Or maybe more pride, Peggy Whitworth of Cedar Rapids told a forum on the Iowa Great Places Initiative on Wednesday at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.

"We're always apologizing and saving that something is good for



**Peggy
Whitworth**
Cedar Rapids

a small town, or it's good for Iowa. We should say, 'It's good,' without qualification. It's an attitude adjustment," Whitworth said to applause from more than 100 people.

Wednesday's was one of 10 forums around the state to let Iowans learn more about the Iowa Great Places Initiative, proposed last winter by Gov. Tom Vilsack. It's designed to allow the resources of state government to help communities, regions, neighborhoods and districts.

That does not mean a big chunk of money is available, cautioned forum moderator Anita Walker, director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. State agencies will refocus some of their existing resources, she explained. "Vision

On the Net

■ www.iowagreatplaces.gov

Iowa funds projects," Walker said.

Three initiatives will become pilot "Great Places" next year. Eventually, Walker said, if Iowa can partner with just five local initiatives each year, "in 10 years, we would have 50 great places we would have transformed."

Suggestions from audience members Wednesday ranged from creating a bike trail through all seven Amana villages to making Cedar Rapids more pedestrian-friendly.

Some ideas referred to attractions, others to attitudes.

"In Mount Vernon and Lisbon, we could have three more restaurants of the caliber of the Lincoln Cafe," said Katrina Garner of Mount Vernon. It's a "fabulous" restaurant, she explained later to a reporter. "People stand in line to get in."

"We need a little more than lip service to diversity," said Linda Langston, a Linn county supervisor. "More women, more people of color, just engaging people at multiple levels."

"Cedar Rapids needs more involvement by more people, so people can claim it as their own and be more involved in it," said Kate Hawkins of Cedar Rapids.

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